



State of South Carolina

Office of the Governor

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GOVERNOR

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May 29, 2007

The Honorable Andre Bauer
President of the Senate
State House, 1st Floor East Wing
Columbia, South Carolina 29202

Dear President and Members of the Senate:

I am hereby vetoing and returning without my approval S. 666, R-66.

Winthrop is one of the great teaching institutions of this state, and I applaud the work done by so many at this important school here in our state. The bill in question adds two members, elected at-large by the General Assembly, to the Board of Trustees of Winthrop University.

I am vetoing this bill because, I believe, it further perpetuates the problems we have in higher education in South Carolina, particularly the politicization of the colleges and universities here in Columbia. One could reasonably assume this bill's purpose is to strengthen Winthrop's hand in its ability to compete with schools like Clemson or USC in procuring state funding. From a single institution's standpoint this could make sense, but from a statewide perspective perpetuating the current system makes no sense.

Many colleges and universities already have some form of lobbyist in Columbia to secure dollars through the legislative process. This type of legislation only furthers the notion that every college and university in the state needs to participate in an "arms race" to more effectively lobby the General Assembly for funding. However, as history indicates, the winners in that process are not the South Carolina families hoping to provide the next generation with a better education. There are several efforts pending that could work to change this larger "arms race" and until they take place I think it is best to hold on legislation like S 666.

The challenges we have in higher education are significant. Since taking office, I have advocated for a more coordinated higher education system so that we can better utilize the money in our education system – and therefore make it more affordable. Our concern has been timely given a recent rating of state higher education systems ranked South Carolina as an "F" regarding our state's affordability. Having a post-secondary program will serve little purpose if our children cannot afford to participate.

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Since 1990, South Carolina's in-state tuition at public schools has increased 244 percent. Last year, the Higher Education Pricing Index increased only 3.5 percent, while the average tuition for public four-year universities increased 12 percent – making us the highest among all Southeastern states for in-state tuition. South Carolina also spends the second-highest amount on higher education as a percent of our budget among Southeastern states. Nationwide, only six states dedicate a greater percentage of their budget to higher education than South Carolina. Yet, South Carolina's in-state tuition is double that of Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina – three states that dedicate a smaller portion of their budgets to higher education. There are affordability problems for our students, and we believe it is important to be cautious of any changes that could, in any way, add to this problem.

As I mentioned earlier I am encouraged that we can make progress on this front. There is proposed funding in the FY 2007-2008 Appropriations Act to establish a joint committee comprised of appointees from both the legislative and executive branches to develop a statewide higher education plan. In addition, the Committee will, hopefully, identify waste and duplication in the system so that we can reinvest those dollars into needed programs and towards the benefits of our students. Again, until these things take place I think it is best to wait on the actions Winthrop has proposed.

For these reasons, I am returning S. 666, R.66 to you without my signature.

Sincerely,



Mark Sanford